

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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R 271556Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5796

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 2930

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4 (DECLASSIFICATION DATE IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE)

TAGS: EINV, PINT, OPIC, LI

SUBJECT: OPIC PROJECT: VANPLY

REF: STATE 121538

1. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT STEPHEN TOLBERT'S DEATH PROBABLY ELIMINATES ANY DANGER THAT HIS AFRICAN FRUIT CO. MIGHT CALL INTO QUESTION VANPLY CONCESSION AREA. VANPLY WAS FIRST CONCESSION SIGNED BY PRESIDENT TOLBERT, AND HE WOULD FULLY APPRECIATE DISASTROUS EFFECT SUCH A MOVE WOULD HAVE UPON NATIONAL INVESTMENT CLIMATE. IN ADDITION, IT OBVIOUS THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT PLANS TO PLAY A LARGER ROLE, AT LEAST BEHIND THE SCENES, IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ALL HIS LATE BROTHER'S ENTERPRISES.

2. WITH REGARD TO LEGAL DISPOSITION OF STEPHEN TOLBERT'S BUSINESS EMPIRE, THE MESURADO GROUP OF COMPANIES, THE FOLLOWING MAY BE OF INTEREST:

(A) ACCORDING TO A USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE IN A POSITION TO KNOW THE FACTS, STEPHEN TOLBERT MADE A NEW WILL 18 DAYS BEFORE HIS DEMISE. THIS AND ANOTHER USUSALLY RELIABLE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCE ASSERT THAT, AFTER BEQUESTS TO HIS OTHER CHILDREN, RELATIVES AND WIDOW, STEVE'S WILL LEFT BULK OF ESTATE AND CONTROL OF MESURADO TO ELDEST DAUGHTER, MRS. STEPHENETTE TOLBERT KING.

(B) MRS. KING IS MARRIED TO CHARLES T. O. KING III, ASSISTANT

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MANAGER OF FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK OF NEW YORK IN MONROVIA,

AND SON OF LIBERIAN AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA. KING FAMILY WEALTHY AND HAS BEEN POLITICALLY PROMINENT, BUT IS RATHER ON OUTS WITH PRESIDENT. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT TOLBERT ANGRY WITH STEPHENETTE BECAUSE OF HER RREFUSAL TO DIVORCE CHARLES.

(C) FIRST OF ABOVE SOURCES STATES THAT ON DAY FOLLOWING STEPHEN'S PLAN CRASH, PRESIDENT TOLBERT WENT PERSONALLY TO INSTITUTION HOLDING STEVE'S LATEST WILL IN TRUST, AND SEIZED ALL COPIES.

(D) ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS, ON MAY 22, STEPHEN TOLBERT'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT (NO DATE GIVEN) WAS READ IN PROBATE COURT. WILL, AS READ, LEFT VARIOUS BEQUESTS FOR STEVE'S CHILDREN AND RELATIVES, BUT GAVE ALL HIS SHARES IN MESURADO GROUP OF COMPANIES TO HIS WIFE OF ONE YEAR, MRS. CARMINA PIERRE TOLBERT, THE DAUGHTER OF CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE LIBERIAN SUPREME COURT PIERRE. MRS. TOLBERT (BY WHOM STEVE HAD TWO CHILDREN WHIL STILL MARRIED TO HIS THIRD--OR FOURTH?--WIFE) IS A TOP MESURADO EXECUTIVE.

3. EMBASSY PRESUMES THAT, IN SUPPRESSING STEVE'S NEW WILL AND PROBATING HIS EARLIER WILL, WHICH PROBABLY MADE AT TIME OF MARRIAGE TO CARMINA PIERRE ABOUT A YEAR AGO, PRESIDENT RETANED SOME MEANS OF CONTROL OVER CARMINA'S OPERATION OF MESURADO.

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